

The Construction of National Security in Russia

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This paper examines the dynamics between the current national security and concrete state management in Russia. The paper outlines the construction of Russian national security framework with the help of a comprehensive security concept. It defines the components of this framework and analyzes strategically important policy areas for the Russian government. It argues that Russian security policies are formulated and carried out in time and space bound arbitration processes which are located in the interfaces of globalized economy and Russian state management. The analysis takes into account the significance of both historical ‘securitization’ and globalized ‘modernization’ in Russian security policy making and implementation. In this way, the paper will also shed light on the predictability of the Russian state and its policies – a question which was raised as a result of the Ukrainian crisis.

In the current world politics, the main challenges of Russian national security are linked with the promotion of economic growth and the building of defense and state capacity. The dominant party system seeks to create a strong administrative leadership. The predictability of the Russian state is built on the ability of its leadership to strengthen the Russian welfare system, prevent crime (particularly organized and narcotics crime, and terrorism) and reverse the demographic crisis of the 1990’s. In the foreign policy Russian national security interests are connected to the creation of a multipolar world order where Russia is one of the key great powers. Russian foreign policy follows a realist line of thinking in which policy is seen as set of concrete time and space bound (tactical) choices. Russian leaders consider the dominant Western value-based politics as having an instrumental role in the advancement of economic and military interests.

The paper advances the idea that the analysis of these developments has to be done in the global context. Russia operates globally and its security decision making is affected and influenced by decisions and events in other geographical locations. The chosen comprehensive security concept underlines this interconnectedness and the complexity of factors which affect security thinking and policies. Comprehensive security covers connections between internal and external security, and the analysis of micro and macro level questions which transcend administrative sectors and national borders. This thinking is also reflected in modern security administration strategies which stress networks, planning and coordinated control of security at global, regional and local levels. Comprehensive security necessitates a certain amount of legal and administrative harmonization between states (‘internationalization’). Clear national jurisdictions are often complemented with flexible networks and diffuse geographical borders. Both researchers and policy makers use the comprehensive security concept in connection with the globalized security sector. Russia is a part of this global transformation where its own challenges are connected to unsatisfactory institutional trust and lacking horizontal coordination, among other things.

At the same time, the historically repetitive process of ‘securitization’ helps to explain Russian specificities which have both internal and external implications. ‘Securitization’ which has gained importance since the middle of the 2000’s has led to the national security framework becoming a significant justification for economic and ministerial decision making. It refers to a situation where serious institutional risks start compromising public trust in government and make guidance of administrative decision-making difficult. As a result of these risks, the Russian leadership has historically relied on traditional-bureaucratic-control methods to reduce ambiguity in its administrative goals and to strengthen its control over decision making. The law has had a central meaning in the formulations and implementation of political and economic centralization and control. The contents of the current national security framework are defined in strategy and policy documents, security and administrative legislation and in the yearly policy speeches of the president. The implementation of prioritized policies is coordinated by the Security Council, a structure which overlaps with the state administration. The paper illuminates the significance of Russian legal thinking in Russian security policy formulations and offers explanations for the role of security authorities in the management of the state.

The tension between ‘modernization’ and ‘securitization’ are seen in Russian choices concerning global governance where Russia wants to have a significantly stronger position in norm and policy creation. Externally, the predictability of Russian policies has been connected to its key economic interests in energy exportation and efforts in the creation of regional security complex with former Soviet states. The Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have become regionally significant attempts to create cross-border cooperation. The unresolved territorial and leadership conflict with the West and most recently with the EU concerning its Eastern enlargement have led to the breakup of dialogue and economic war. Russia has insisted on a multipolar world order with sovereign legal and historical understanding of the state and society. In the identity politics of the Russian state Russia has always remained a great power. The Crimean annexation and the Ukrainian crisis can be seen as an unintended end result of a long term regional power conflict. The annexation symbolizes in a concrete manner Russia’s long term national interests within the national security framework and the willingness of the current leadership to make hard and risky prioritizations in this regard.